

# Kawi language

**Kawi** or **Old Javanese** is the oldest attested phase of the Javanese language. It was spoken in the eastern part of what is now Central Java and the whole of East Java, Indonesia. As a literary language, Kawi was used across Java and on the islands of Madura, Bali and Lombok. It had a sizable vocabulary of Sanskrit loanwords but had not yet developed the formal *krama* language register, to be used with one's social superiors that is so characteristic of modern Javanese.

## Contents

<b>Name</b>	
<b>History</b>	
<b>Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Austronesian origins</li> <li>Sanskrit influence</li> <li>Phonology</li> <li>Vocabulary</li> </ul>
<b>Writing system</b>	
<b>Usage</b>	
<b>Literature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prominent authors</li> </ul>
<b>Scholars</b>	
<b>See also</b>	
<b>References</b>	
<b>Bibliography</b>	
<b>External links</b>	

<b>Kawi</b>	
Old Javanese	
ඇංශාමාඩි	<i>Bhāṣa Kawi</i>
<b>Native to</b>	Java, Bali, Madura, Lombok
<b>Region</b>	Indonesia
<b>Era</b>	literary language, developed into Middle Javanese by 13th–14th century
<b>Language family</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Austronesian</li> <li>▪ Malayo-Polynesian <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Javanic</li> <li>▪ Kawi</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Language codes</b>	
<b>ISO 639-2</b>	kaw ( <a href="https://www.1oc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?code_ID=228">https://www.1oc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?code_ID=228</a> )
<b>ISO 639-3</b>	kaw
<b>Linguist List</b>	<a href="http://multitree.org/codes/kaw">http://multitree.org/codes/kaw</a>
<b>Glottolog</b>	<a href="http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/kawi1241">kawi1241</a> ( <a href="http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/kawi1241">http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/kawi1241</a> ) <sup>[1]</sup>

## Name

The names 'Kawi' (ඇංශාමාඩි *Bhāṣa Kawi*), from Sanskrit: कवि *kavi* "poet", and 'Old Javanese' are often used interchangeably. Sometimes, however, 'Old Javanese' is used for the historical spoken language that was ancestral to modern Javanese, while the name 'Kawi' is restricted to the standardized written form of Old Javanese, still used to some extent as a literary language.

The name "kawi" is derived from the root *ku*, which in Sanskrit means "poet", and, in derived forms, a "wise, educated man". The syllabic meter of Kawi poetry is *sekar kawi*, which means "flowers of the language", *sekar* itself deriving from the Sanskrit "sekhara" ("garland").

# History

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While evidence of writing in Java dates to the Sanskrit "Tarumanegara inscription" of 450, the oldest example written entirely in Javanese, called the "Sukabumi inscription", is dated 25 March 804. This inscription, located in the district of Pare in the Kediri Regency of East Java, is actually a copy of the original, dated some 120 years earlier; only this copy has been preserved. Its contents concern the construction of a dam for an irrigation canal near the river Śrī Hariñjing (now shortened to Srinjing). This inscription is the last of its kind to be written using Pallava script; all consequent examples of Old Javanese are written using Javanese script.

## Development

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Old Javanese was not static, and its usage covered a period of approximately 500 years – from the Sukabumi (Kediri, East Java) inscription until the founding of the Majapahit empire in 1292. The Javanese language which was spoken and written in the Majapahit era already underwent some changes and is therefore already closer to the Modern Javanese language.

### Austronesian origins

The most important shaping force on Old Javanese was its Austronesian heritage in vocabulary, sentence structure and grammar that it shared with its sister languages in Southeast-Asia.

### Sanskrit influence

The Indian linguistic influence in Old Javanese language was almost exclusively Sanskrit influence. There is no evidence of Indian linguistic elements in Old Javanese other than Sanskrit. This is different from, for example, the influence of Indian linguistic in the (Old) Malay language.

Sanskrit has had a deep and lasting impact on the vocabulary of the Javanese language. The *Old Javanese – English Dictionary*, written by professor P.J. Zoetmulder in 1982, contains approximately 25,500 entries, no fewer than 12,500 of which are borrowed from Sanskrit. Clearly this large number is not an indication of usage, but it is an indication that the Ancient Javanese knew and employed these Sanskrit words in their literary works. In any given Old Javanese literary work, approximately 25% of the vocabulary is derived from Sanskrit.

### Phonology

Sanskrit has also influenced both the phonology and the vocabulary of Old Javanese. Old Javanese also contains the retroflex consonants, which might have been derived from Sanskrit. That is disputed by several linguists, who hold the view that it is also possible that the occurrence of these retroflex consonants was an independent development within the Austronesian language family.

### Vocabulary

A related question is the form in which Sanskrit words were loaned in Old Javanese. The borrowed Sanskrit words in Old Javanese are almost without exceptions nouns and adjectives in their undeclined form (Sanskrit *lingga*). A wordlist of 200 basic vocabulary items is available at the Austronesian Basic Vocabulary Database which shows some of these loans.<sup>[2]</sup>

# Writing system

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The Kawi script is commonly called *hanacaraka*; the more correct term is *Dentawyanjana*. It is a syllabic alphabet consisting of 20 letters and ten digits and a number of vowel and consonant modifiers. The script of the island of Bali, heavily influenced by neighboring Java, has a unique sub-form called Tulisan Bali. Prince Aji Caka (an Indian migrant) is credited with establishing the first known kingdom of Java, called Java Dvipa (Swarna Dvipa) and also introducing the Kawi language was and the twenty letters of the syllabic hanacaraka script.<sup>[3]</sup> The Javanese also credit the language to Aji Saka, a legendary hero of Medang Kamulan Kingdom. The earliest known inscription of Kawi is found at Gunung Wukir Temple in Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia.

## Usage

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Kawi is not truly extinct as a spoken language. It is commonly used in wayang golek, wayang wong and wayang kulit, in addition to high activities such as a Javanese wedding, especially for the stylised meeting ritual of bride's parents with groom's parents in the ceremonies of Peningsetan and Panggih. Archaically or for certain nobles very strongly attached to tradition, it is used for the Midodareni, Siraman and Sungkeman ceremonies of the Javanese wedding.

The island of Lombok has adopted Kawi as its regional language, reflecting the very strong influence of neighbouring East Java. Today, it is taught in primary school education as part of the compulsory secondary language unit of National curriculum. Traditionally, Kawi is written on lontar prepared palm leaves.

Kawi remains in occasional use as an archaic prose and literary language, in a similar fashion to Shakespeare-era English, which has such aesthetically and arguably more cultivated words as thy, thee, hast (<https://en.m.wiktionary.org/wiki/hast>) and so forth.

## Literature

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There are many important literary works written in Kawi, most notably Empu Tantular's epic poem, "*Kakawin Sutasoma*" (E.M. Uhlenbeck, 1964: "A Critical Survey of Studies on the Languages of Java and Madura", The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff), from which is taken the National motto of Indonesia: "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*". Although often glibly translated as "Unity in Diversity", it is more correctly rendered as "[although] scattered, remaining [as] one"—referring to the scattered islands of the archipelago nation, not as an expression of multicultural solidarity as may be perceived in modern times.

A more modern work is the poem "*Susila Budhi Dharma*", by Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, the founder of Subud. In this work, he provides a framework for understanding the experience of the latihan kejiwaan.

Famous poems, epics and other literature include:

- Kakawin Tertua Jawa, 856
- Kakawin Ramayana ~ 870
- Kakawin Arjunawiwaha, mpu Kanwa, ~ 1030
- Kakawin Kresnayana
- Kakawin Sumanasantaka
- Kakawin Smaradhana
- Kakawin Bhomakawya
- Kakawin Bharatayuddha, mpu Sedah dan mpu Panuluh, 1157

- [Kakawin Hariwangsa](#)
- [Kakawin Gatotkacasraya](#)
- [Kakawin Wrettasañcaya](#)
- [Kakawin Wrettayana](#)
- [Kakawin Brahmandapurana](#)
- [Kakawin Kunjarakarna, mpu "Dusun"](#)
- [Kakawin Nagarakertagama, mpu Prapanca, 1365](#)
- [Kakawin Arjunawijaya, mpu Tantular](#)
- [Kakawin Sutasoma, mpu Tantular](#)
- [Kakawin Siwaratrikalpa, Kakawin Lubdhaka](#)
- [Kakawin Parthayajna](#)
- [Kakawin Nitisastra](#)
- [Kakawin Nirarthaprakreta](#)
- [Kakawin Dharmasunya](#)
- [Kakawin Harisraya](#)
- [Kakawin Banawa Sekar Tanakung](#)

## Prominent authors

The following are notable authors of Kawi:

- [Candakarana](#)
- [Sang Hyang Kamahayanikan](#)
- [Kunjarakarna](#)

## Scholars

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The first scholar to address Kawi in a serious academic manner was [Wilhelm von Humboldt](#), who considered it the father of all Malay-Polynesian languages. Furthermore, he deprecated misconceptions about Kawi being wholly influenced by Sanskrit, finding that Kawi did not use [verb inflexion](#), thus differing from Sanskrit's highly developed inflectional system. Kawi might have come from a very ancient settlement in the pacific side of Asia. In Kawi language, the meaning of a sentence must be grasped through word order and context. Humboldt further noted that Kawi utilizes [tense](#) distinctions, with past, present, and future, and differentiated moods via the [imperative](#) and [subjunctive](#).

Numerous scholars have studied the language, including the Dutch expatriate Indonesian Prof. Dr. Petrus Josephus Zoetmulder S.J., who contributed an enormous quantity of original texts and serious scholarly study to the language, and his pupil and associate, Father Dr. [Ignatius Kuntara Wirayamartana](#). Other eminent Indonesian scholars of the language include Poedjawijatna, Sumarti Suprayitna, Poerbatjaraka and Tardjan Hadiwidjaja.

## See also

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- [Bhinneka Tunggal Ika](#)
- [Johan Hendrik Caspar Kern](#)
- [Eugenius Marius Uhlenbeck](#)
- [Petrus Josephus Zoetmulder](#)

- Old Malay

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2. "ABVD: Old Javanese" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20100527055204/http://language.psy.auckland.ac.nz/austronesian/language.php?id=290>). *language.psy.auckland.ac.nz*. Archived from the original (<http://language.psy.auckland.ac.nz/austronesian/language.php?id=290>) on 2010-05-27. Retrieved 2019-01-18.
3. <http://www.apu.ac.jp/~gunarto/lang/mileston.html>

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## External links

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- [About lontar](https://web.archive.org/web/20041207051056/http://www.bucalic.de/lontars/index.html) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20041207051056/http://www.bucalic.de/lontars/index.html>) (palmleaf manuscripts).]
- [Zoetmulder's Dictionary of Old Javanese](http://sealang.net/ojed/index.htm) (<http://sealang.net/ojed/index.htm>) (SEAlang library)
- [Old Javanese inscriptions](http://sealang.net/oldjava/) (<http://sealang.net/oldjava/>) (SEAlang library)
- [An Introduction to Old Javanese](http://www_aa_tufts_ac_jp_en_training_ilc_ilc-list_20152) ([http://www\\_aa\\_tufts\\_ac\\_jp\\_en\\_training\\_ilc\\_ilc-list\\_20152](http://www_aa_tufts_ac_jp_en_training_ilc_ilc-list_20152)) at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (A pdf primer in English, though the web page is in Japanese)

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